

A

LETTER

From a *Theology vol 115.*

GENTLEMAN.

To a Member of

PARLIAMENT;

Concerning

TOLERATION.

EDINBURGH

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SIR,

Understanding, that pains is taken by some, to dispose Members of Parliament, To grant a *Toleration* to those of the Episcopal Perswasion: And considering that at our last communing, ye judged it necessary, That those who are convinced how dangerous it may prove to this Nation and Church, should endeavour to put this matter, in its due light: I freely offer you my thoughts.

Schism, and *Division* are pointed out in Scripture, not only as a *Sin*, but as a *Judgement*. A *Sin*, as committed by us: A *Judgement*, when Men are given up of God, to a Spirit of Division, for their Sins. And it is sure, a Kingdom divided against it self, and so of a Church, or any Society, cannot stand, but come to ruine. How earnestly doth the Apostle beseech the *Corinthians*, to take care, that there should be no divisions amongst them, but that they should be perfectly joined together in the same Mind, and in the same *Judgement*? And how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, the *Psalmist* doth inform us: And therefore much need have ye, according to the advice of the Apostle, to mark them which *cause divisions*, and avoid them. And it may be looked upon, as not a little surprising, that any should be talking, let alone, forming, a design of introducing, and Establishing *Schism* and *Division* in this Nation by a Law; and surely the Cunning Malice, and restless working of the wicked one, against this Church, doth eminently appear in it: And therefore, that you may not be deceived by fair Speeches; and drawn over to that design, or induced but faintly to oppose it: It would be seriously considered.

First, That no necessity can be pleaded, for a *Toleration*, in this Kingdom; in our present circumstances.

(*Imo.*) Because, this Church imposes no *Sinful Terms* of Communion; and even those, whom a *Toleration* may be supposed to gratify, cannot alledge any scruple of Conscience, to join with us in Church-Communion; our Doctrine, Worship, Sacraments, and Church Censures, being the same, that were Professed, and Performed, under the late Prelacy; Yea, so far are the People of this Nation, from pretending scruple of Conscience, or separating from us, upon any account, that we dare averr, they freely join

with us, generally, in all places, where they are not constrained, or over-awed, by particular Persons, for obvious ends.

(2^{do.}) That, as it is manifest to all that are acquaint, with the Sentiments of those of the Episcopal Perswasion in *Scotland*, So, I dare appeal to their own Consciences, if the things wherein they differ, from the Presbyterians are not, and have been still reckoned indifferent, by them. But more of this afterwards.

(3^{tho.}) A Toleration was never desired, nor given to any People in any Nation, where there were no Penal Laws against such as dissent from the Established Church; as is manifest, in the present case. But, I shall have occasion, to speak of this more fully, When I come to take notice of Objections, and Exceptions, that will readily be offered, against my design.

(4^{tho.}) If it be seriously considered, that the People of *Scotland* cannot scruple, and do not refuse to Join with us: where they are not restrained, as abovesaid: Then it must be acknowledged, that the Toleration, spoke of, can ease the Consciences of none; and all the aim, it can have, must be, merely to furnish a Maintainance, for a few Episcopal Ministers. And I am very confident, the Wisdom of the Nation, will rather find it necessary, to provide them otherways, than disturb and throw all into Confusions, by granting a Toleration upon that account.

(5^{tho.}) And especially with respect to Ministers; a Toleration will appear utterly unnecessary. If the Condescendence, and Indulgence, of Church and State, be considered. Are there not above an Hundred Episcopal Ministers, suffered to continue in Churches? How many have been Received by the Judicatories of this Church, who served under the late Prelacy? And are not the Terms, upon which the Church are willing to Receive them, known, to be most Easy and Condescending? all which, being duely pondered, a Toleration, in this Kingdom, is utterly unnecessary. But

2^{dly.} As it is unnecessary; so it would be highly Inconvenient, to grant a Toleration. As may appear, by the following Considerations.

[1^{mo.}] It would be so far from composing Matters, and healing any Breaches, that may be begun among us, as some may vainly imagine; That it will exceedingly increase them, With all their bad Effects. Which may be the more easily foreseen, if it be duely considered, that the very expectation of a Toleration, and the hopes those of the Episcopal Perswasion have conceived, of countenance and favour Has already occasioned their starting aside, making separation, and committing several very gross and unwarrantable Disorders in sundry places, of the Kingdom, of late. Tho these very Persons lived in communion, and did

submit

submit to, and partake of, Gospel-Ordinances with us in Unity and Peace; Yea, and I dare assure you, That by Letters written from *Edinburgh*, Persons were excited to separat That, so the Parliament might be the rather induced to grant a Toleration. And even from all this it is easy to observe; That it is not a matter of Conscience with those Persons: But that they give a preference to that way upon some other account: And start aside at this time upon Design.

[2^{do}.] It would not only occasion *Divisions*, but such high *Irritation* of Humours, *Imbittering* of Spirits, and *Faction* Practices, in Congregations, yea, and in Families that have lived in Unity, Peace, and Love, for more than Twelve or Fourteen Years: That we should not only become uneasy, to our selves; but a Scandal to our Neighbours, And a Reproach to Religion it self. The lamentable beginnings, of all which, are but too manifest already, in some places; where those Men have put their Artifices, and Engines, a Work. And albeit some will perhaps attribute much of this to that which is commonly called the *Præservandum Scotorum Ingenium*: Yet it may be added, Consciencious Persons in this Nation are more tender in their Consciences about those matters than they are, in other Nations.

[3^{io}.] Such a Toleration would not only break good Order; but ruine the Discipline of the Church: And open a gap for a deluge of Errours and Scandals, to break in upon us. And when Persons shall be Accused for their Errors, Miscarriages, and Scandals, tho never so gross, and uncontroverted; If they are but unwilling, to give Satisfaction, (which is the case of too many) they have no more to do, but say, *we are not of your Communion*: Which answer has been returned, to the Ministers in some places of the Nation, of late. And some have professed themselves *Popish* to avoide the Censures of the Church. Yea, and considering, that many are indifferent, of waiting upon Publick Ordinances at all; It is plain, that those of this corrupt Disposition would give the same answer when challenged by any for their none-Attendance upon the Ordinances. And thus, by a liberty of Hearing any where, they would find defence for Hearing no where. And do not Wise and Religious Men see, how much this tendes, to introduce and encourage *Atheistical Libertinism*, and all manner of Licentiousness; and expose the poor People, to be practised upon by Traffiquing *Priests* and *Jesuits*; who never fail to Fish in such muddy Waters; and do as openly go about their Idolatrous Worship and Service, Strately: And use all their other Artifices, to Deceive and Delude, in several places of this Nation of late, as if in a *Popish* Country? Not to speak of the mischief we may suffer by *Arminian* Teachers; and Introducers, of *Superstition*. And Lamentable Instances, of all the the above-mentioned

mentioned Particulars may be given; which have fallen out since the hopes, of a Toleration, or Connivance, has been conceived.

(4^{to}.) Whatever may be said, in favours of different Opinions, and the forbearance of them; yet, it must be granted, that it is no small prejudice, to the Nation, That we should have such things among us: And that it would be highly inconvenient, not only needlessly to increase these differences, but also to perpetuate, and entail them upon Posterity by a Legal Toleration: Which, otherways, in time, would be utterly Obliterated. As the general Unity, and Harmony, we have enjoyed, since the late happy Revolution, doth abundantly manifest; which is broak again of late, in some places: To the grief of many, by the endeavours of some Men, who draw away the People in some places: Pretending the countenance of Authority for what they do; and yet using seditious and disloyal Practices and Perswasions, against the Civil Establishment. And it is obvious in so doing, they intend to make a schism, by raising up a Party for their own Support; and making such alterations in Church and State, as they judge will render them and their Friends, always necessary to the Government: Not doubting (as it is but just to expect) that they shall always be the darlings of that Party, they have raised; and the Faction they have made.

[5^{to}.] Seeing it is manifest by what is said, the People of this Nation can make no scruple of Conscience against Communion with us, and so a Toleration is not needful for them: And we also think there is enough said, with respect to Ministerial Communion. But it notwithstanding of all this, a Toleration be still pressed, I conceive the Introduction of Prelacy is necessarily intended and designed. For according to their Principles and Perswasions, they can have no Order nor Government among them without Bishops (unless they intend to turn Independents, and I conceive the change to Presbyterians would be as Native. But this by the by) And these Presbyters must be subject to Bishops. Now let us be informed, To the Inspection and Jurisdiction of what Bishops, must those tolerated Presbyters be subject? Or must they be unaccountable as their Introduction is? Must we have *Scottish Bishops* to Inspect, Govern and Ordain them? And can this be allowed, without a manifest encroachment, upon the *Claim of Right*? Or must those Presbyters be under the Inspection, Direction, and Government of *English Bishops*, and be Ordained of them? And if so the Wise and Worthy Peers and Patriots of this Nation would advert. how far this would seem to revive, and really fortify, the Claim *English Bishops*, particularly those of *Canterbury* and *York*, have pretended, for a Government and Jurisdiction over this Nation. And seeing some, of that

Nation,

Nation have not stuck to assert the Dependence of the Sovereign and Imperial Crown of *Scotland* upon that of *England*, and maintained their assertion, by that and suchlike arguments: It would be advised How far Men of this design may have an intention, to enslave this Nation to that of *England*: and to use this as an artifice, to pave the way to it? And upon the whole I am abundantly convinced, That the Subversion of the happily established Government, of the Church, is certainly designed, by those who press a Toleration; and no Reason or Pretence to the contrary, can in the least, make Men think otherways; there being such a necessary Connexion, between a Toleration of Episcopal Ministers, and that of *Episcopacy* it self. And whatever plausible pretences this Toleration may be introduced with, or seeming Qualifications it may be restricted by; I am sure, those, who are upon that design, will assume such a liberty to themselves, and pretend such countenance from some in the Government, That no bounds would hold them. As is manifest, by the Encroachments they have made upon the *standing Laws* already. And, I think, it would be unworthy of the Wisdom of the Nation, to speak for the *present Establishment*, and yet grant a Toleration, which is in effect to Pull down with the one hand what they Build with the other; and unwarily to yeild to that, which will Undermine, what they intended, to Support and Maintain.

I easily perceive, Men will be ready to object, do not Dissenters enjoy a Toleration in *England*? May not then Episcopal Dissenters have the same privilege in *Scotland*, where Presbyterian Government is Established? This Objection will be of no force, if the discrepancy, of our cases, be duly considered.

[] The Dissenters in *England*, are straitned in their Consciences, and have exhibited the particular Grounds, and Reasons, why they cannot join with the Established Church; which those we have to do with here, cannot pretend; as is above said. This they did, in that Conference, appointed by Authority, which was managed, by some Dissenting Ministers, on the one hand, and some of the Episcopal persuasion, on the other, at the *Wey-London*, upon King *Charles* his return. and so untender were those, of the Episcopal side, although they themselves acknowledged, the most of the Dissenters scruples, were, about matters, meerly indifferent, according to their own reckoning. Yet, so far were they from yeilding, in the most minute things, that they added new inventions: which made the World construct, that whatever was the good design of Authority, no accommodation was sincerely intended by those of the Episcopal Clergy: And that all they sought was, to know what length Dissenters might go; and what would reach to pinch them: that they might be sure to exclude them. The full account of all

all this is to be found, in that valuable Book, *Mr. Baxter's Life*. It is needless to give an account, how much has been written since, in defence of the *English* Non-conformity, remaining without any shadow of Answer, to this day. I shall only acquaint you, the more sober and serious in the Church of *England*, are abundantly convinced, that the Dissenters have met with hard measure; they stick not to assert so much in writing; and do Lament the Obstinacy of the Church, in occasioning and keeping up of Schism, for things which they themselves own to be indifferent. as that Learned and truly Honourable Prelat Dr. *Burnet*, in his Preface to his Book, upon the Articles of the Church of *England*, and several others.

2do, It is well known the Dissenters in *England* were under severe Penal Statutes, and a rigorous Execution of them for their Non-conformity; So that many were forced, to leave their Native Country; many were Imprisoned; and were not relieved, till Death gave them a Discharge of their Troubles; others suffered the hardest of Exactions; and all this, meerly upon the account of their Principles; and because they could not submit to, and approve of, the Additions and Inventions of Men, in the Worship and Service of God. And therefore, it was highly reasonable, that Authority should interpose, and deliver Men, from these heavy Burdens, so unwarrantably imposed, upon them. Now, what Penal Statutes are enacted, and put in Execution, against those of the Episcopal persuasion, in *Scotland*? Where do they now live, that are banished, meerly for dissenting, where are such Imprisoned? was there ever any one of them, since the late Happy Revolution. that was libelled and conveyed before any Judicatory, Civil or Ecclesiastick; or suffered the least punishment, or Censure, upon the account of their persuasion, or dissenting from the Established Church? And, for what any of them have suffered (if it well deserves that name) upon the account of their Disloyalty, and disaffection to the Civil Government, we are not to account.

3do. The Church of *England* is better secured than we are. Is it not expressly provided, as a fundamental in the constitution of the Civil Government in *England*, that the Supream Magistrate, King or Queen, shall be of the Communion of the *English* Church? And is it not established, by their Laws, that all Officers, Civil and Military, shall be of the Communion of their Church? So that they have not the least reason, to fear any prejudice, from their Dissenters. And were we as well secured, and had we these special provisions; And if those of the Episcopal persuasion, among us, had no further prospect, than the Dissenters of *England*, as we would not fear, so, I am very confident, they would not desire a Toleration.

Obj. 2d. If it be objected, that Presbyterians, when under the Hatches, are as fond of, and pressing for, a Toleration as any; But, when the Reins of Church Government are in their hands, they will not allow that Liberty to others, they enjoyed themselves. Witness the Indulgence granted by King *Charles* the 2^d; and the Liberty by King *James* the 7th. I shall not insist long on this; The Answer to the foregoing, will much remove this Objection; if judiciously applyed. But, it may be considered also,

First, The Indulgence presently granted by the State to Episcopal Ministers, yet possessing Churches and Benefices, in those places, where people are most addicted to that way, doth not only equal, but far surmount the Indulgence granted to Presbyterian Ministers by King *Charles* the 2^d. And, if Presbyterian Ministers could have had protection upon as easy Terms, all of them had been indulged; and not one of them ejected, or, its plain none of them would have refused to qualify themselves to the Civil Government.

2^{dly}. Were not Presbyterians in those times required under the form of an Oath to Renounce their *Solemn Covenants*; which the King, Parliament, and whole Nation had entered into with God: and several other Oaths, which they judged unlawful were required of them? Were they not under the most severe Penal Statutes, more cruel and Bloody by far, than those of *England*? And were they not most rigorously executed? Yea, such was the cruelty of the Executors of these *Sanguinary Laws*; That, where it was possible they went beyond them? was it not Death, for any Minister to preach in any House, or in the Fields? and were not the Hearers lyable, to the same punishment? *7a 7. Parl. 1, Cap. 8* And each of them bound to inform against one another under the highest pains. Did not the common Souldiers fall upon Men and Women, even by the High-way; or while they were going about their necessary Employments: put Questions to them; And so examined their most secret Sentiments anent the Kings prerogative, Bishop *Sharp's Murder*, and the like? And did not those ignorant, and malicious, Souldiers, shoot them dead upon the spot; if they stood, were not satisfied, with the Answers, the poor people returned to their Questions? Was it not a Duty, owing to the Human Nature to free people, from such Rigorous and cruel persecutions? But, Blessed be God, they have not found our Governours men of that Spirit, and temper.

Obj. 3. If notwithstanding of all that had been said, those of the Episcopal persuasion pretend They cannot joync with Presbyterians upon account of the Government of the Church.

I very much admire if any shall be found, to make this motion; Or with what credit, and conscience, they can do it: Especially, if it be considered,

(1) That, while Episcopacy was Established, the known and constant Doctrine of the party proclaimed it utterly unlawful, to separate from any Church, upon the account of *Modes* and *Forms* of Government; and the Metropolitan of all *Scotland* asserted, *They were Brain-sick-Men that separated from the Church, upon this account, from the Pulpit of St. Andrews.* And, to seek a proof of this their Doctrine, (it being so universally known) were for Men to prove that the Sun shined in those days. Neither did they in this, swerve from their Principles; They holding, the Government, of the Church, to be *Ambulatory*: With the Learned Dr. *Stillingfleet*, and others

2dly. They owned, by the Acts of Parliament, and by the Oaths imposed and taken in those times, That it was the Magistrates prerogative, to order and to dispose of, the Government of the Church; Especially by the *Test*. And therefore I hold, That all those, who took that Oath, and do, or call themselves equal to the Civil Government, are thereby necessarily bound to own Presbyterian Government, presently Established in *Scotland*. Do they not solemnly swear, in that *Test*, to own, and to maintain, all the prerogatives of the Crown? And is it not as manifest, that, by the standing Laws, enacted in those times, (to which the Bishops in Parliament did consent) it was declared, the Prerogative of the Crown, to order and dispose of the External Government of the Church, &c. *Charles 2. Parl. 2. Act. 1.*? And seeing then, our Gracious *Queen*, as well as our late *Sovereign*, of ever Blessed Memory, have by their Laws established, and confirmed Presbyterian Government; those, that own their Authority, cannot quarrel the Government of the Church: without involving themselves, in the guilt of Perjury.

3dly. It is manifest: The generality of those, of that way, if not all, who are of them, are dissatisfied with the civil Establishment; and have been, and still are Enemies to the late happy Revolution; and therefore would never Swear Allegiance to the Blessed Instrument of our deliverance. And whatever may be the seeming respect they pay to our most Gracious Queen whom GOD preserve to be a Blessing to us) they neither have changed their Principles nor Designs; they are still concerned for their King & the Eldest; and to prepare matters for another Revolution. Do not for of them, in their Families, yea and in their Meeting-Houses, Pray for King, Queen Dowager and the Generous Prince that maintains them even since the Queen's happy accession to the Crown? How few of them pray explicitly for the Queen; especially of the Meeting House-Preachers. Do they not address themselves to GOD, in such an equivocal and jagged way, in behalf of their *Sovereign*; carefully avoiding every particle that may the least discriminate the Sex; that were there no more, this is sufficient.

make serious Men detest and abhor their Meetings? When they were upon Addressing Her Majesty, they used such Arguments, as manifestly prove, they are Men of the Old Stamp, and design still. Those, who were on the place, and wrote to those in the Country, used those Arguments, to induce their Brethren to join in the Address. 1. That it was conceived by advice of the ablest Divines and Lawyers; And yet so, as it did not imply a promise of qualifying to the Government. 2. That the People began to refuse, to contribute for their Subsistence. And as this can be proven by their own Hand-Writing: So it manifestly discovereth, that they are still upon the old design. And the Queen owes the Expression of their Duty and Loyalty not to the Addressers, but to those who had wearied to contribute for their Supply. All which being considered, it may be justly enquired, with what confidence any more Encouragement can be required for such persons, and with what safety it can be given them?

And here I cannot but take notice, of the unaccountable boldness, and contempt, of the Episcopal Clergy, in their Address to the queen. Do they not take upon upon them, to call themselves the National Church? And how this Affronts the Supreme Authority of the Nation, every one may see. Yea they stood not to arraign the *Claim of Right*; by calling that the truly Apostolical Government of the Church, which the States, in their Wisdoms, justly declared, an unsupportable Greivance to the Nation. Was not this to strike at the Root, to unhinge the whole Constitution; and to tell the Queen, in plain *Scots*, that her Title to the Crown is supported by a Foundation that is Unchristian? And therefore can not be maintained. Have they not in their Sermons, which they have had the boldness, not only to Preach, but to Print most unnaturally and calumniously loaded their Native Country, with the Horrid Murther of King *Charles* the First. Tho' Strangers, the Lord *Hollis*, Mr. *Baxter*, and several others, and many Famous Witnesses yet living do manifest the contrary? And do they not also, in those Sermons, impeach all the Revolution-Principles; and consequently lay a Foundation, for a Lybel, against all that have been concerned, in the Government, whether as Supream or Subordinate? and who can tell, but a Lybel, of that nature, may be advanced, and followed out, against all that cannot expect the Happiness, to have Men of their Stamp and design, to be their Advocats; and obtain their Remission. And this I speak (GOD is my Witness) not to stir up Authority, to use Severity upon the persons, or Fortunes of any; but meerly to give Men due impressions of things; and to excite the Honourable Court of Parliament, by whose Widomes, under GOD those Evils may be happily prevented, and those Men may be easily tyed to abetter behaviour, without any violence.

And, if some shall take upon them, to urge a Toleration, and pretend that it will be a great satisfaction to the Queen; We crave leave to say that the Queen is sadly abused. Have we not received many Gracious and Repeated Assurances, of Her Majesties Royal intentions to *Maintain and Protect* the Government of the Church, throughout the whole Course of Her Reign; as it is by Law Established. And if so, no Toleration can be allowed, seeing it is by Law Established without any such thing. And as Her Majesty has promised; so we desire to believe, She shall be found *A Strict and Religious Observer of Her Word*. And those, who thus speak, may be justly reckoned Sowers of Dissention, and creators of Jealousies in the Hearts of Her Majesties best Subjects: And, to satisfy their own Humours, and to Answer their own designs, they borrow the Countenance of the Queen. And, seeing matters stand plainly thus, those, who make this suggestion, should have no Credit given them; Especially considering, Her Majesty, in Her most Gracious Letter, to the present Parliament, hath given us Assurance, of Her firm Resolution, *To maintain and protect* us in our Religion, Rights and Liberties *as at present Established by Law*. And likewise that nothing is *Recommended* by Her Majesty, but what is for our *security and welfare*. And a Toleration is manifestly contrary to both.

Lastly, if it be Alledged, that we need not apprehend Danger from those of the Episcopal Perswasions; tho' they should get the upper hand; seeing they conceive the things, wherein they differ from us, are indifferent in themselves: And consequently will not oppress, and persecute others for them.

In Answer, to this, know there is no Arguing against experience; which affords a pregnant proof, that generally, those who Introduce things indifferent and of Human Invention, into the Worship and Service of God; or into His House are a thousand times more concerned for the brats of their own Brain, than for the Truths of God, and Institutions of Jesus Christ. How many were exposed to, and actually underwent the most cruel Persecutions, and Bloody Sufferings for their Non-conformity in Scotland; while in the mean time, Papists, who were far more Un-conform; save in the point of Government, And the greatest Debauchees and Blasphe-mers, (to say no more) went unpunished. And, in our Neighbour Nation, (tho' I desire not to reflect, but to narrate what they themselves have published to the World) is it not abundantly known, that more are punished, or at least have been, for the neglect of Ceremonies, than for the grossest encroachments upon the Laws, of God, and Nature? *Hickeringil*, Rector of *Ali-Sainte*, tells us, that he had been Thirty Years a Minister in that Church, and he never knew any Excommunicat, for Murther, Adultery, Incest

Incest, or any of these Crimes; tho' he knew many Excommunicated for neglecting, or refusing to use a Ceremony. So that I can promise no security from the indifferency of their Judgements anent those things; wherein they differ from us. And however modestly they may begin, they would undoubtedly arrive at all the hights of Cruelty, and Persecution. And therefore, as ye would not have Men driven from their Native Country, Friends, and Fortunes; accounting it a Blessing, not to forgotten, that God has favoured them to escape; tho' according to the present prospect of Affairs, it is much to be doubted, if an hiding place shall easily be found: As ye would not see the Prison Houses and Rocks in the Sea cramm'd full of godly persons, that cannot comply with the Times; As you would not have the Law of Nature suspended; and persons, of the nearest Relations, Such as Father and Mother, Son and Daughter, Husband and Wife, discharged, to pay the Duties, they owe to one another, under the highest pains. And as you would behold the Scaffolds, reeking and running, with the Blood, of your dearest and nearest Relations: As many yet alive have seen, and may yet live to see, if God of His Mercy, do not prevent it, And stir up our most Gracious Queen, and the Wise and Worthy Peers, and Patriots, of this Nation, timeously to advert to it; beware of the beginnings of evil; and oppose a Toleration, as introductive, of all those Cruelties, this poor Land hath suffered. And let none pretend, that this is bold Propheying: and that it is most uncharitable, to conceive Men to be of that Spirit and Temper: Know, I do not pretend to Prophecie: But, what hath been, may be: And prudent Men do alwayes reckon, That Persons of the same temper and design, and under the like impressions, will do, in time to come, as they have done formerly. And altho Men, till they be prepared, and disposed, by lesser evils may bogle, at that, which afterwards they will boldly committ, and say, with *Hazael*, to the Prophet, *Are we Dogs, that we should commit such Cruelties, and Barbarities?* Yet the Example, of the same *Hazael*, as well as many other pregnant ones, doth abundantly convince mee, That, from the present softness of Temper, and aversion from gross things, there can be no security promised. This, in all Duty,

S I R,

Your Humble Servant.

